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JAIR CHAYIM BACHARACH:

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

EVEN Fame has its accidents. It is not always the greatest minds, and certainly not the most important scholars concerning whom the history of literature furnishes us with information. In our every-day life, both complicated circumstances and trivial causes often work together to exclude a man, who is above the common level, from the position in which his brilliancy ought really to shine forth, and to pure accident, that most unscrupulous of heirs, is left the task of dealing with the intellectual work that he leaves behind him as a heritage. But none of the heroes of Jewish literature have experienced so fully this fate, both in lifetime and after death, as that most learned, versatile, and original of the German Rabbis of the seventeenth century—R. Jair Chayim Bacharach.

The most gloomy century in the modern history of Judaism—the century that witnessed the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, the massacres by Bogdan Chmielnicki, the crimes of Sweden, Poland, and the Cossacks, as well as the spiritual plague-spots of the belief in Sabbatai Zebi, the spread of the Cabbala and general intellectual obscurity—this same century produced in Chayim Bacharach a man who was in advance of his time, and who, in full possession of all the knowledge and learning of his day, was unfettered by it, but rose high above it in full intellectual freedom. He might have become the founder of a true scientific spirit among the Jews of Germany and of other lands, the teacher of the exile in systematic study of the Talmud and the whole body of traditional literature: so complete was his command of this wide-spreading branch

of learning, so profound and independent was his intelligent and thorough grasp of it. He was orthodox, and strict in his adherence to the minutiae of *German* observances and piety, yet in his knowledge of philosophy was equalled by but few of his contemporaries. Devotedly attached to the Cabbala, he busied himself, as far as the materials to hand permitted, in the study of natural science. Although he evinced remarkable acumen, both in the intricacies of the Halacha and the profound spirit of the Agada, he still found leisure to occupy himself seriously with mathematics and astronomy, and displayed ability in historical and critical studies. The highest degrees of receptivity and of productiveness were united in him. Although he was deeply absorbed in his main studies, he did not allow them to crush him to the ground. With a strength of mind which we alone, who now regard it from a distance, can fully appreciate, he shook himself free from the bonds of the self destructive Pilpul, which enthralled the intellect like an iron chain. Thus he was able to contemplate the phenomena of Talmudic dialectics with a keen, unclouded glance, and to catch the spirit of its laws. Whilst other men looked down with indifference or contempt upon all non-Talmudic subjects, and allowed the study of the Bible, grammar, and all historical knowledge to decay, and lie neglected, his untiring assiduity and zeal for inquiring into every branch of Jewish learning led him to collect whatever came to his hand, whether it consisted of notes upon the Massora or philosophy, upon the Agada or mathematics, upon the Halacha or natural science, whether it was an ancient poem, an historical remark, or a ritual practice. All this work was, in truth, the first revelation of a scientific spirit among the German Jews, the development of which has evolved for us the history and science of Judaism. In his diligence in collecting and tabulating information, I can compare him only to his great Italian contemporary, Abraham Joseph Solomon Graziano, except that he displayed more originality and independent research in his work, and did not rely upon borrowed or

purchased materials. In order, however, to comprehend this truly singular combination of profound erudition with a versatile scientific method, it is necessary to examine the soil upon which this rare mind flourished, to consider the circumstances which surrounded him from his birth onwards, and to take a glance at the distinguished family of which he was the intellectual heir. It is said that nature gathers strength through several generations of a family, and ultimately to the astonishment of the world produces a creative mind. That this is sometimes true R. Chayim Bacharach furnishes a convincing proof.

At the head of this family, like a sun in the heavens, stands R. Jehuda Liva b. Bezalel, "the tall R. Löw," the most famous and most important Rabbi of his day. Through his eminent son-in-law, R. Isaac b. Samson Cohen and his wife, the rabbinically learned Fogeles,¹ he became the ancestor of the house of Bacharach. Eve, the daughter of Isaac, in the year 1600,² became the second wife of R. Samuel b. Isaac. Brought up under the eyes of her grandfather, that light of the exile, at the side of her distinguished brothers, R. Chayim, afterwards Rabbi of Prague, Frankfurt-on-Main and Posen,³ and R. Naphtali, afterwards Rabbi of Lublin, well educated by her illustrious parents, Eve grew to be one of the most extraordinary women of whom Jewish literature speaks. She was as well versed in the Scriptures and the Midrash as any learned man, and was, moreover, thoroughly acquainted with Hebrew and Aramaic. She read both Agadic works and the liturgical poetry of the Synagogue, without needing a commentary, and was ready with an explanation of passages that puzzled many a competent Rabbinical scholar.⁴ Her husband, however, who was twenty years

¹ *Gal-Ed*; ed. Koppelman Lieben, Nos. 84 and 91.

² בכורים, ed. N. Keller, i. 6; N. Grün, *Der hohe Rabbi Löw*, 22.

³ Perles, *Geschichte der Juden in Posen*, 77; Horovitz, *Frankfurter Rabbinen*, ii. 25.

⁴ *Memorbuch of Worms*, קבץ על יד, III., 15; חות יאיר, Preface.

of age when he married her, was worthy of her rare talents and ability. It was not long before the renown of the young and learned Rabbi, who received additional distinction by his union with a noble family, spread throughout the country. After acting as preacher in Prague and Rabbi in Jung-Bunzlau, in Bohemia, he was appointed to the important post of Rabbi in Worms, which had already been occupied by many celebrated Rabbis. Energetic in action, determined and self-conscious, with all his humility, he succeeded, in spite of his youth, in winning unbounded respect. Like his grandfather and teacher, the tall R. Löw, he boldly showed his contempt for calumny,¹ and allowed nothing to deter him from doing what he deemed to be right. But, in the midst of his peaceful and prosperous activity, a terrible misfortune befell him, which threatened to ruin his ancient and honoured community, and which, unhappily, cost him his life. One of those persecutions, which seemed indeed the very offspring of hell, broke out against the Jews of Worms, who took to flight in fear of the horrors that menaced them, leaving their most precious possessions, the Synagogue and the cemetery, to the fury of the savage mob. On Good Friday, the 7th of April, 1615, the roof of the Synagogue was torn off, the cemetery was laid waste, and the tombstones, regardless of their antiquity, were broken to pieces.² The Rabbi, Samuel, fled to Gernsheim on the Rhine. By the 24th of April, the Electoral Prince Palatine of Heidelberg had indeed suppressed the riot by force, but the victims who had fallen could not be restored to life; among them was R. Samuel. He died upon foreign soil in his fortieth year, and on the 26th of May, 1615, he was buried in the

¹ חוט השני, *Resp.* 27; N. Grün, *ib.*, 19. The *Responsum* of Samuel was written in the year of the death of the tall R. Löw, which took place on 17th September, 1709; this is seen from the addition of the letters דכ"מ to the name of R. Löw. R. Samuel addressed *Resp.* 49 to his grandfather-in-law and teacher, R. Löw.

² Khevenhiller, *Annalium Ferdinandeorum*, viii. 758.

cemetery of Alsbach on the Bergstrasse.¹ Although he died young, he left behind some valuable and learned writings, which, as they treat both of mathematics and astronomy, differ considerably from the usual tendency of works of that age. Thoroughly acquainted with the literature of the Talmud, and known as a widely-sought authority in answering Rabbinical questions, he laboured with great industry in a field generally neglected, viz., in preparing new critical commentaries² to the works of Maimuni upon the Jewish calendar, to the astronomical book of Abraham b. Chiya upon the form of the earth, and to other works of Jewish astronomers.

His unhappy wife, the high-minded and pious Eve, left Worms with her children, who were still of tender years, and returned to her parents and relatives in Prague. It was with a boy, eight years old, named Samson, and, as far as I can ascertain, with three daughters,³ that the young widow sought her parents' home. Completely absorbed in

¹ As his tombstone was described by L. Lewysohn, in his *נפשות צדיקים*, No. 30, only fragmentarily, a copy of it, kindly procured for me by Mr. Max Ketsch, of Gernsheim on the Rhine, may not be out of place here:—

או"י

כי אבד כלי חמדה ננוז וטמון פה ה"ה הגאון הגדול מהו' שמואל שהי' גדול ליהודים אבד זרמ' דק"ק טורבין קעלין פארליין ובוירמנה הבירה והי' בקי בכל חדרי התורה שמץ מנהו ה"ה כתובים בשו"ת חות יאיר שפתותיה שושנים ובנירוש ווירמו בגולה הלך ולגערנסהיים נשאוהו רגליו הערבוני' וימת שמואל בן ארבעים שנים ונק' ביום ג' בחדש זיו זיו(י) [ו] פנה אורו
כבה לפק ת נ צ ב ה

The stone, which was only set up about a hundred years after the death of Samuel, contains the mistake of *חות השני* for *חות יאיר*. From the explanation in *חות יאיר*, p. 272b to p. 228b, we also see that the sentence that denotes the year *כבה אורו* refers to the 27th of Iyar; cp. Zunz, *Monatstage*, 29, and *Literaturgeschichte*, 429.

² *חות יאיר*, *Resp.* 146, at the end. Out of his works, most of which have been lost, his grandson could only save a few fragments: *vide* Cod. Oxford, 2149. About his poems, see Zunz, *L. G.* 429; his penitential poem *אנה מארץ* is found in Cod. Oxford 1154 (see Neubauer, p. 349).

³ Lewysohn, 53, only mentions Samson, and remarks, "whether he had any more children is unknown."

the education of her children, she passed her years of mourning in pious works and study, ever cherishing in undying love the fond memory of her deceased husband. No less a person than Isaiah Hurwitz, the famous author of the *Two Tables of the Covenant* (של"ה), who was revered almost as a saint, proposed in vain for her hand, and deeply deplored the fact of his being deemed unworthy of so holy a union.¹ Loved by all, and treated with the greatest reverence by her learned brothers,² Eve chose to pass her life as a widow, and as a mother devoted to her children. R. Chayim Cohen, her brother, the grandson of the tall R. Löw, who had married Bella,³ the daughter of the Primator of Prague, Samuel b. Bezalel, his cousin, became the teacher of Samuel⁴ (Samson?), in whom the talents of his father already displayed themselves. According to the custom of the time, he was chosen to be the son-in-law of some rich man, and went to Ungarisch-Brod, in Moravia, where, in 1627, he married Dobrusch, the daughter of the wealthy and distinguished Isaac b. Phœbus,⁵ who, so as not to be confused with his brother-in-law, the Moravian district magistrate, Dick-Isaac, was called Dünn-Isaac. He had not yet intended to accept a Rabbinate, when the sufferings of the war of 1627 disturbed his new home; his father-in-law, as the head of the

¹ חות יאיר, Preface.

² Ib., להפליג מחלוקת כבוד והדור שנתנו שני הגאונים הנ"ל באחותם.

³ According to S. Hock, *Familienregister*, Bella died in Shebat, 1677, in Prague, surviving her husband about forty years. Cp. Meir Perles, מנילת יוחסין, ed. Lewin, p. 9b.

⁴ V. Cod. Oxford, 746², where the annotations of R. Samson and his uncle and teacher, R. Chayim, are to be seen.

⁵ חות יאיר, p. 272b; אונגרשין ברור, as Bacharach writes it, is no error, but the dative form in German of the name of the place, upon which see Rudolf Hildebrand in the *Zeitschrift für den deutschen Unterricht*, III., 300. The town which is now called Ungarisch-Brod was then called Ungarschen-Brod. So also, according to Simcha b. Chayim, in Bills of Divorce the words must be written אובן אלט"ן, as Alten Ofen is the same as Alt-Ofen; see שמות ס', p. 114a.

community, was dragged to prison, and could only be liberated upon the payment of a ransom of 10,000 gulden for himself and a fellow-prisoner.¹ Beneath the weight of these calamities his pecuniary resources began to fail, and Samson was compelled to accept the post of Rabbi at Göding, in Moravia, which was offered him.² An inscription, dated 1629, written upon an inner wall of the synagogue, and composed in the form of an acrostic of forty-three words, gives the full name of the Rabbi, who was then twenty-two years of age, and who seems to have inherited the art of making acrostics from his grandfather, R. Isaac b. Samson Cohen.³ An insight into the untroubled state of his inner family life, in spite of his varying fortunes, is afforded us by a hymn that he composed for his wife on Purim, 1629, and which, being in a musical form, was sung and played by her every week on the coming in of the Sabbath.⁴ Bereaved of gifted and promising children in their early years,⁵ Samson's life was not of the happiest. In 1635 we find him in the ancient and famous Moravian congregation of Leipnik, paying diligent attention to perfecting his knowledge in Rabbinical learning.

It was in this town and in this year that he was admonished by his uncle, R. Naphtali Cohen, of Lublin, not to let the study of the law absorb him to the neglect of the claims of secular life and of his still unmarried sister.⁶ His mother, Eve, had remained behind in Prague, where she had already given two of her daughters in marriage.

¹ חות יאיר, p. 277b.

² *Ib.*, p. 237a, ומורה בק"ק גידונג רב ומורה.

³ *Ib.*, p. 224a; another acrostic for the wall of the Synagogue he composed upon the deliverance of Ung.-Brod. from the troops of Mansfeld; *ib.*, p. 223b; cp. Zunz, *L. G.*, p. 437. Upon the acrostics of R. Isaac Cohen, see S. Hock, in *Gal-Ed*, p. 47.

⁴ תקנתיו לכבוד אשתי שתננן אותו, *לעלב*, No. 66, p. שומר ציון הנאמן בבלי זמר.

⁵ שבעתי מרורות בשיכול בנים לקברות ילדים נחמדים; חות יאיר, p. 237b; בצורות בועין מקטפין ידיעין וזכרות חכמה בפניהם מאירות.

⁶ חוט השני, *Resp.*, 96, at the end.

The names of her sons-in-law are known. They are Liepmann Günzburg, of Prague,¹ whose full name was Liebermann b. Löb Darschan (his occupation was that of writer of scrolls of the Law),² whose wife, Hindel, died at Prague in 1641, and Moses Perez, called Sabele, Rabbi of Schnaittach, in Bavaria, whose wife Tebzel, was buried in 1669, in Prague.³ The children of the last-named daughter of Eve afterwards settled in Prague, where they and their descendants deservedly enjoyed the highest esteem of their neighbours. Thus Simeon, the son of Sabele, had a son, Isaac Lovotiz (which name he adopted from that of his father-in-law, David Lovotiz), who became Primator of Prague.⁴ Simeon was famed for his complete mastery over the whole Mishna, which he was able to recite by heart. He died in Adar II., 1729, at the age of eighty-two.

But the real star of the family was yet to rise. In 1638, a child was born in Leipnik to R. Samson, who was called Chayim, probably after his grand-uncle, the celebrated Rabbi of Posen, who had but recently died.⁵ The name of Jair was added afterwards during a dangerous illness.⁶ The period of his childhood was a dreary time, full of

¹ Mentioned upon the tombstone of his daughter Miriam, who died in 1680 (S. Hock).

² He is thus described upon the tombstone of his daughter Rebecca, who died in 1669 (S. Hock).

³ תשרי ת"ל (S. Hock). F. Meir Perles, p. 11*b*. His grandson, who died in advanced years in Prague, on Saturday, 25 Kislev, 1734 (תצ"ה), assumed his name פריץ המכונה סבלא (S. Hock).

⁴ Meir Perles, *ib.* When the latter wrote his *Genealogy of the tall R. Löw*, in 1727, Simeon was already over 80 years old. His wife, Rebecca, died in Elul, 1714 (S. Hock). The primator signs himself (20 August, 1725) Isak Lowetitz; see Frankel-Grätz, *Monatsschrift*, 1887, p. 213.

⁵ בשנת ת"ך בן כ"ב, as R. Chayim describes himself in בכורים, I., 23, according to which in חות יאיר, p. 230*a*, the phrases בן כ"ר and בן כ"ג must be explained to refer to the beginning and end of his twenty-third year. R. Chayim Cohen died in 1635 in Posen; v. Perles, 77, note 31, and Brüll, *Jahrbücher*, 7, 154, note 4.

⁶ In the Preface to חות יאיר, p. 2*a*, he states, ושמי אשר מן השמים ניתן לי בחולי יאיר: וכך שמי מבטן קורא לי חיים.

sorrow and trouble. The horrors of the Swedish war came to a climax for Leipnik in 1643. In a letter to Axel Oxenstierna from the camp at Dobitschau, dated July 3rd, 1643, Torstensohn reckons "Leypenik" among the Moravian places he wishes to "impound"; shortly afterwards it was really invested by his Major-General Mortaigne. After being reduced to a state of starvation by a ten weeks' siege, the town was stormed and the inhabitants declared prisoners of war. But the people were so disheartened and harassed that bare existence seemed a gain to them, and R. Samson composed penitential hymns for his congregation that had escaped destruction which to the present day are recited there on the 17th of Tammuz.¹ In 1643, however, when these terrible sufferings had come to an end, he left Leipnik in order to fill the post of preacher in Prague, the home of his family, where his own youth had been passed.² The promising son of Samson was six years of age, when he was taken to Prague, where Eve was made happy by witnessing the gradual intellectual development of the most talented of all her descendants. But the distress caused by the Thirty Years' War, that ended so disastrously for Prague, played sad havoc with the happiness of this peaceful family. They fled from the town during the pestilence that broke out after the dreadful siege of the old and new town of Prague, lasting from the 26th of July to the 2nd of November, 1648, and for six months sought shelter in a small Bohemian village.³ For

¹ חות יאיר, p. 237b; Zunz, *L. G.*, p. 438. In 1879 I obtained a copy of the poems from the parchment records of the Synagogue in Leipnik. The letters ח"ב are to be corrected to ח"ג. Cp. Dudick, *Schweden in Böhmen und Mähren*, 86, 90; also cp. שומר ציון הנאמן, No. 74, p. 148d, and No. 76. p. 152c.

² It may perhaps be allowed to see in his words in the חות יאיר, p. 237a, נתנה לפרט זמן דת נחמה לפרט a reference to the date 7th of Marcheshvan, 1643.

³ *Ib.* 237b, ומישך שנה is not an exact date; cp. Juda Löb b. Joshua, in his מלחמה בשלום, ed. Wagenseil, *Exercitationes sex*, p. 102, *sqq.*, with the account given by S. Dudik, *Schweden in Böhmen und Mähren*, 1640-1650. p. 289-342, whose sources furnished by the Jewish eye-witness, Juda Löb

six years and a-half R. Samson continued to perform his functions as preacher week after week in Prague, until, in the summer of 1650, he achieved the highest happiness of his life—that of becoming the successor of his father, as chosen Rabbi of the community of Worms.¹ Eve's daughters were now all either dead or married, and she had no longer any reason for remaining in Prague. She therefore accompanied her son to his new home, where she had passed her young days with the husband whose memory she still cherished, and whose prosperous activity she had there witnessed. But it seemed as if she had only been desirous of awaiting her grandson's thirteenth birthday and its attendant festivities, before carrying into effect a desire she had long entertained—a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Thus, after remaining scarcely a year in Worms, we see her, a weak and aged woman, parting from her family with an heroic spirit to undertake a pilgrimage to Palestine. But she who had undergone so many trials through life was denied her last wish; in the middle of her journey death overtook her, and she was buried in the Bulgarian city of Sofia.²

Chayim Bacharach was thus thirteen years of age when he came to the famous town of Worms, about which he had heard his grandmother and his parents speak so much. His earliest impressions, however, which formed the germs of his ideals, took their root in Prague. He always remembered how, standing by the south wall of the Alt-Neusynagogue, near the Ark, where the seat of his father was, he used to have as a neighbour the revered R. Pinchas Hurwitz, the great student and interpreter of Asheri, who, as the

b. Joshua, contain valuable explanatory and additional notes, an excellent example of the importance of Hebrew sources that are yet to be utilised in general history. R. Samson himself wrote a few remarks, in verse, upon the siege as an introduction to his poem, *שומר ציון הנאמן*, No. 55, p. 110b.

¹ ונתקבלתי לרב סוף שנת ת"י בוורמיי"ש, p. 237a; חות יאיר, and No. 123, p. 116b, ש"י שנת ת"י שיהיה סוף שנת ת"י.

² *Ib.*, Preface.

President of the Rabbinate in Prague, and a colleague of R. Simeon Spira, ended his days there, after having been Rabbi in the imperial town of Fulda.¹ This special devotion to Asheri's compendium of the Talmud was a tradition in Prague, which was a great help to studies and discoveries in the vast field of Talmudical lore. R. Samson was also a commentator of Asheri,² whilst another great-grandson of the tall R. Löw, named Simeon Brandeis,³ was so thoroughly conversant with the writings of this renowned jurist that he was able to repeat them all off by heart. (This Simeon was an uncle of the worthy R. Meir Perles, of Prague, the chronicler of the family of R. Löw.) The young Chayim Bacharach followed in their footsteps. Carefully instructed by his father, as well as other teachers in the Bible, Mishna and Talmud, he had at the early age of thirteen already discovered the secret, that a diligent study of Alfasi, and further an intimate acquaintance with Asheri, would cause the gates of the Talmud to open wide before him. Even after he reached manhood, R. Chayim was still so thoroughly accustomed to the abridged Talmud by Asheri, that he marked at the side of his copy of this compilation, which was less handy an edition than that which we now possess, the corresponding pages of the Talmud, so that he could in an instant refer to the source of any extract contained in this his favourite work.⁴ In his father, who excelled no less as a dis-

¹ *Ib.*, No. 123, p. 116*b*. He and Simeon Spira gave their approval (in 1650) of the collection of sermons that R. Samson Bacharach intended to publish on leaving Prague; *ib.*, p. 237*a*. The evidence of R. Samson and R. Chayim Bacharach confirms the statements upon his epitaph (see *Gal-Ed*, No. 138) as to the extraordinary erudition of this famous man, who died towards the end of 1653.

² The work called **אבן הראשה**, that was commenced in Leipnik, only contained R. Samson's commentary to twelve tractates, and was then broken off; see **חזון יאיר**, p. 237*a, b*.

³ Meir Perles, p. 10*a*. Simeon was the grandson of Gütel, the daughter of the tall R. Löw, who died on Friday, 7th Tishri, 1634 (תצ"ה). He died Friday, 13th Tammuz, 1665 (S. Hock).

⁴ **חזון יאיר**, No. 123, p. 116*b*.

tinguished scholar in the Halacha than as an eminent preacher, he had a splendid teacher, whose side he appears not to have left until, when still a youth, he entered the house of his future father-in-law. At the beginning of the year 1653, he married in Fulda,¹ Sarlan, the daughter of Sussman Brilin,² who, after the death of R. Samuel Aaron b. Eliakim, which had but recently taken place, was elected Rabbi in his stead. Through this union the descendant of the tall R. Löw became closely related to the most distinguished family in Germany, that had offshoots in all directions, viz., the family of Oppenheim. His brother-in-law, Isaac Brilin, the courageous and learned Rabbi, first of Hammelburg, and after the expulsion of the Jews from that town in the year 1670, of Mannheim, was the son-in-law of Simeon Wolf Oppenheim³ in Worms, so that Abraham, the father of R. David Oppenheim, and Samuel,⁴ the richest and most powerful financier among the Jews of Germany, who was the chief agent at the court of the Emperor Leopold in Vienna, were his brothers-in-law. R. Isaac, moreover, through his eldest daughter Hennele,⁵ became the father-in-law of Wolf Oppenheim of Worms, and through his second, Frumet,⁶

¹ בסוף שבט [תי"ד] בבואי לביתי מק"ק פולד שהייתי ; No. 81, חוט השני שם על חתונת בני ש'.

² The *Memorbuch of Fulda*, p. 18b, contains the following information: יא"נ הנאון המופלג בחכמה מהרר שמואל אהרן בן מורינר רב רבי אליקים ז"ל שהיה פה ק"ק בולדא אב"ד וראש הישיבה והרביץ תורה בישראל עבור שנתנו יורשיו וכו' [נפטר יו"ה ט' אייר ת"כ ונקבר ביו"ה הנ"ל]. The year of R. Sussman's death is not given; on p. 26a we read of him: יא"נ המאור הגדול הנאון החסיד ועניו מהורר משולם אליעזר זוסמן בר יצחק ז"ל ע"נ אי"ו עבור שהרביץ תורה בישראל והעמיד תלמידים הרבה והיה מורה צדק ואב ב"ד ור"י פה ק"ק בולדא וברוב קהילות במדינות אשכנז ועמד בפרץ ויסד ותיקן ברוב חכמתו צרכי רבים וביטול גירושין גם בניו נתנו נדר וצדקה להקדש בשכר זה תנצב"ה עש"י שבנע"א :

³ קבץ על יד III. 18 ; Kaufmann, *Samson Wertheimer*, p. 75.

⁴ *Ib.* 3, note 1.

⁵ קבץ על יד III. 38.

⁶ Kaufmann, *ib.*, 75, note 1.

of Samson Wertheimer, the chief agent and district Rabbi of Vienna. These illustrious relationships, however, were only to produce their effect in the future; for the immediate present, directly after his marriage, it was the erudition of the new family which he had joined rather than their brilliant relatives that was of service to Bacharach. We learn from R. Wolf Traub, the Rabbi of Witzenhausen, Mainz and Würzburg,¹ that the young son-in-law of Sussman Brilin became his most zealous pupil, and for many years continued to perfect his already marvellous knowledge under his guidance and in his house. Through his father-in-law and brothers-in-law, the inclination of Bacharach to obtain a mastery over the Talmud by the help of Alfäsi and Asheri, became strengthened.² Through R. Sussman, Chayim became also the nephew of the learned Rabbi of Heidingsfeld, R. Azriel Brilin.³ More than six years were passed in study at the house of R. Sussman. Bacharach then felt himself sufficiently strong in his acquaintance with rabbinical literature to be independent, to desire authorisation to fill the post of Rabbi from one of the authorities of the time, and to leave his home to seek for a rabbinate. In the winter of 1659-60 he therefore made his way from the house of his father-in-law, in Fulda, back to the home of his parents in Worms.⁴ As he himself tells us, he was slightly built, and of a weak constitution.⁵ In 1660 he was ordained a Rabbi, by the celebrated Rabbi of Frankfurt, R. Mendel Bass, of Cracow, also called R. Mendel R. Isaac R.

¹ חות יאיר, p. 235a; cp. אבן השהם, *Resp.*, 58, where he also signs himself חכם לב בנימין זאב ווייל, and also his approbation of the work (Fürth, 1693).

² חות יאיר, No. 123, p. 116b.

³ Kaufmann, *ib.*, 75, note 3. I would suggest that he is identical with the Azriel b. Isaac Berlin, of Frankfurt, who, owing to a dispute with R. Mendel Bass, was forced to surrender office (Horovitz ii. 44, note 3). He afterwards obtained another rabbinate.

⁴ חות יאיר, No. 150, כאשר חזרתי לבדי מבית חמי מק"ק בולדא לביתי, חות יאיר בק"ק ווירמישא בחורף שנת ת"ך.

⁵ *ib.*

Abigdors.¹ From that time Bacharach, by means of regular correspondence, maintained a warm friendship with the son-in-law of R. Mendel, R. Meir Stern, Rabbinats-assessor in Frankfurt, and afterwards Rabbi of Fulda and Amsterdam. At the fairs held in Frankfurt, the public sermons of the young twenty-two-year-old Rabbi attracted a large amount of attention.² It was most probably about this time that Bacharach, after delivering several sermons by invitation in different towns of Germany, was appointed to the post of Rabbi in Mainz.³ On the 11th of Adar, 1662, he lost his mother, who departed this life after an illness that had lasted ten years. Her husband, R. Samson, had for many years in vain prayed⁴ for her recovery in the propitiatory hymn which he had himself composed, and which he recited on every day before the new moon; he stood now alone on the threshold of old age. Most of her children were already married when she died.⁵ Her daughter Fögele, who bore the name of her great-grandmother, was already wedded, before her parents went to reside in Worms, to the Rabbinats-assessor of Prague, Salman Schulhof, surnamed Moschels, who was one of the victims in the burning of Prague, in 1689. Two of the most prominent rabbinical families in Germany were united

¹ *Ib.*, in the beginning of No. 159. At the end of his preface he speaks of the way R. Mendel sometimes wrote his name, whence I infer that Isaac R. Abigdor was the father-in-law of R. Mendel. Cp. Horovitz, ii. 40 *sqq.*, and Ch. N. Dembitzer, *בלילת יופי*, p. 51b.

² *חזון יאיר*, p. 230a, and *בכורים*, I., 23.

³ Upon his epitaph (Levysohn, p. 72) he is explicitly mentioned as Rabbi of Mainz. I would suggest that the correspondence with his father *חזון השני* (No. 83-92), and the remarks upon his practice as a Rabbi in the year 1664 (*חזון יאיר*, No. 235) probably belong to the period he was in Mainz.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 272b and p. 225b.

⁵ That R. Chayim was the only son is shown by, *e.g.*, *חזון השני*. Nos. 83, 92. The *Memorbuch of Worms* (*קבץ על יד*, III. 22) mentions a sister, Leah, who survived him, as well as another, Hendlin. R. Chayim himself makes mention of his brother-in-law, Löb Gunzburg, the son of R. Simon Schatel; see *בכורים*, v. 25; cp. Brüll, *ib.*, vii., 153.

in bonds of kinship by the marriage of Salman's son, Isaac, to the daughter of R. Ephraim Cohen, the far-famed Rabbi of Ofen. Isaac was taken prisoner in the storming of the town, in 1686, and after being ransomed by his relative, Samuel Oppenheim, in Vienna, became a Rabbi in Prague, from 1697 till 1733, when he died.¹

The numerous branches of the family of R. Chayim Bacharach received an addition, when his father entered into a second marriage on Thursday, the 16th of Shebat, 1664 with Phega, the widow of Moses Cohen, Rabbi of Metz, and formerly of Nerol.² He thus became the brother-in-law of Dr. Tobias Cohen, surnamed Moschides,³ who afterwards grew to be so renowned as a doctor and an author, and related to some of the best Polish families, which connections were destined in later years to tempt Bacharach to exchange Germany for Poland. But very soon afterwards, in the year 1666, Phega was snatched away by death from her second husband in an epidemic that raged in Worms, and to which a daughter of Bacharach also fell a victim.⁴

In this year R. Samson had the pleasure of seeing his son promoted to the Rabbinate of Coblenz.⁵ They were disturbed times when R. Chayim began his new ministry. The waves of the Sabbatian movement now ran very high; there was not a single place in Germany but was affected by it. Just as on stormy nights the billows of the sea dash up even against the lighthouses, so the clearest intellects were obscured in this fearful spiritual excitement. R. Chayim Bacharach had penetrated too far into the mysteries

¹ Meir Perles, p. 12a, and Kaufmann, *ib.* 5.

² חוט השני, No. 91, and חות יאיר, p. 258b.

³ Cp. Kaufmann, in *Révue des Etudes Juives*, XVIII., 294. Tobias was then eleven years old.

⁴ Levysohn, *ib.* 62; קבץ על יד, III., 15; about this terrible pestilence, cf. F. Solden, *Die Zerstörung der Stadt Worms im Jahre 1689*, p. 2. In fol. 49, in vol. XXIV. of the MSS. of R. Chayim Bacharach we read:—

מאורעי ופנעי א"א הגז"ל ברעש תכ"ו ובפרט מיתת אשתו ואחותי;

⁵ חות יאיר, p. 230a, and p. 272b.

of the Cabbala to remain indifferent to, or to oppose, its victorious progress now that it was actively at work. The calculations based on the number of the verses in the Bible, the astounding revelations and prophecies that were extracted from the numerical value, and other combinations, permutations, and supposed coincidences of certain important Hebrew words, were no longer an academic sport, a pleasant exercise of harmless ingenuity, but life and reality, actual history strengthened by signs and wonders. With throbbing hearts the people listened to tidings from the East about the doings of Sabbatai the Messiah, and his prophet Nathan. From the South, from the scene of what was happening, from every place through which the news sped on as far as Amsterdam, where a veritable moral earthquake had turned every head, the tidings came to Worms. Here a complete series of records of the Sabbatian movement, in the originals and in copies, was collected in the house of R. Samson Bacharach and his son R. Chayim. In these papers might be read all the wonderful devices and verbal calculations by means of which the year of the appearance of the new Messiah and his exact name were ascertained beyond all manner of doubt.¹ All the Cabbalistic productions, the pious penitential prayers and utterances of Nathan Gazati, as they were promulgated through letters which he sent from Corfu to the Island of Zante and to Jassy, and even to Amsterdam, found their way hither. The report of the famous Polish preacher, R. Berech Darshan, who had betaken himself to Turkey in order to look upon the Messiah with his own eyes, and who gave his personal impressions of him in a very circumstantial pamphlet, was in the possession of Bacharach. Like his father before him, he kept up a correspondence with R. Eisik Deggingen,² the Rabbi of the German community in

¹ See the Appendix in Bacharach's Table of Contents to No. 35 of his MSS., from which all that follows is taken.

² Ch. N. Dembitzer, *בלילת יופי*, p. 96b.

Amsterdam, who sent faithful accounts of the letters that arrived there daily with news of the miracles performed in the south. Things had come to such a pass there, that a special prayer for the King Messiah was offered up in the synagogues. The town of Ofen, owing to its connection with Turkey and Austria, became a focus of the new agitation, and maintained a regular service of couriers in consequence of these events.¹ R. Moses Halevi had addressed a letter from Cracow to his brother-in-law Meir Isserls in Vienna,² on the subject of the Messiah, for the son and stepson of R. David Halevi, of Lemberg, had actually been with Sabbatai, and had returned to their father with a present and autograph letters from the Messiah. R. Löb b. Zechariah,³ Rabbi of Cracow, and previously of Vienna, himself copied the letter that the Cabbalist Abraham Cohen had despatched to the Messiah. All these letters and pamphlets, that form a complete collection of the whole epistolary literature of this movement, and which must have been at the disposal of R. Jacob Sasportas, when writing his *Zizat Nobel Zebi* (The Fading Flower of the Messiah, Zebi), were in the possession of Bacharach, a testimony to his all-absorbing interest and personal participation in this affair. All the papers that we now possess form only an insignificant fraction of the mass of Sabbatian literature that he stored up in the course of these events. I have only been able to glance at a few pieces, which he bound up in the thirty-fifth volume of his collection of manuscripts, when the greater number of them had been lost or burnt. But these few well suffice to prove that he was not merely an observer, an annalist of this movement, but a participator in it—even one of its victims. The fact that, even when he had arrived at years of maturity, long after these occurrences, he never wrote the name of the Messiah without calling him Rabenu Sab-

¹ Cp. also Kaufmann, *Die letzte Vertreibung*, p. 91, note 3.

² *Ib.* 92, note 4. ³ *Ib.* 81, note 1, and J. M. Zunz, עיר הוצרֶק, 116.

batei Zebi, is quite sufficient to show us his sentiments with regard to the originator of those sad events. But, besides this, he distinctly relates how thirteen scholars of the Talmud, in Coblenz, bound themselves to him by a written agreement to occupy themselves daily under his guidance in sanctifying themselves by pious study to receive the joyous news of the Redemption, and in preparing themselves in a becoming manner for the great event. He who knows what part "the thirteen" played in the cult of the Sabbatians will see that there was no accidental circumstance in the choice of this number. Finally, when we remember how one of the historians of this epidemic, the physician and step-brother of R. Chayim, Tobias Moschides,¹ laments that even learned Rabbis, whom he had much rather not name, were drawn into the net of this Sabbatian folly, the thought cannot help occurring to the mind that he was alluding to the son of his step-father when he broke out into this complaint. Just as after a devastating inundation, the highest point the waters of the flood reached in the distressed city is marked in order to be remembered by posterity, so history must place the high-water mark of the Sabbatian movement at the name of R. Jair Chayim Bacharach.

The new office to which R. Jair had been appointed was both a distinguished and a lucrative one. The Rabbinate of Coblenz in the Lower Archdeaconry of Trier² was one of the two Rabbinate which controlled the spiritual affairs of all the Jews in the lands of the Electorate of Trier. The Electoral Prince and Archbishop of the district was Karl Caspar von der Leyen, whose endeavour it was to

ואפי' רבים מחבמי הארץ והרבני הגדולי, מעשה טוביה ¹ p. 27a., הנקובים בשם אשר לא רציתי לפרסמם גם הם קבלו ליה לרב ומלכא עליהו

² Decree to the Jews by the Archdeacons and Electoral Prince of Trier of the 10th of May, 1723, p. 42. See E. Hecht in *Frankel's Monatsschrift*, 7, 190, חות יאיר, No. 112, בגליל, במדינת טריר בג"ת [תחתון] בק"ק קובלענץ.

heal the wounds that had been inflicted upon the land by the rule of his quarrelsome and intriguing predecessor, Philipp Christopher von Soetern. A period of good fortune seemed to await Bacharach in his new post. As in Mannheim and Heidelberg, so also elsewhere, the condition of the Jews had so much improved that neither in Coblenz nor Trier was there a Ghetto, and the people there breathed the air of freedom.¹ Ardent devotee to his Rabbinical functions and to the increase of his learning, free from all material cares, he had begun to feel used to the possession of ample means in the present, and to the prospect of an assured income for his family in the future, when all too suddenly a severe blow reminded him of the instability of the human lot. It was the custom in Coblenz, as well as in other communities on the Rhine, that the Rabbi had to be re-elected every three years, or at least his appointment had to be again confirmed. This law—which had been enforced by avaricious non-Jewish authorities, who exercised this power because certain taxes were attached to the office, a law by which the influence of the Rabbi was degraded and subverted—was now to be applied in all its force against Bacharach. His term of three years had barely closed, when the ratification of his re-appointment was refused, and he was suddenly left without a livelihood. He has not told us the names of his enemies and the exact circumstances of his humiliation.² Only one incident of his work in this community is preserved in his writings.³ Ehrenbreitenstein, also called Thal, a town opposite Coblenz, on the west bank of the Rhine, had then no congregation. The only Jewish in-

¹ *Ib.*, No. 135.

² *Ib.*, p. 230a. The account of the hostility he drew down upon himself owing to his unsparing partisanship (p. 48a), probably also refers to his work at Coblenz.

³ In No. 226, he mentions a question he addressed to his father from Coblenz. Limburg, whence Abraham Hess sent his questions (Nos. 33-36) to R. Jair, belonged to his rabbinate.

habitant was Bärmann Thal, a pious, respectable, and well-educated man, who was a butcher by trade, an occupation which, while prohibited to Jews in the towns of the Electorate of Trier, was permitted them in the country. He was in the habit of crossing the ship-bridge, when the Rhine was not frozen over, every Sabbath to come to divine service at the synagogue in Coblentz. Bacharach forbade him to make the passage in a boat on a Sabbath when the bridge was removed, in this decision following the practice of older authorities of the place.¹ Moreover, he refused to allow him to kill the animals himself, although he was well acquainted with the laws of Shechita (Jewish method of slaughtering animals), and though the governor of the fortress in Ehrenbreitenstein had commissioned him, under certain penalties, to provide meat for the inhabitants of the place, on the ground that for the requirements of Christians animals that were not killed in the strictly legal manner could also be used as food.²

Owing to his short stay in Coblentz, he was unable to carry on any uninterrupted activity. At the outbreak of the plague he had to depart from the town, and to withdraw to Limburg on the Lahn, leaving behind a valuable and indispensable part of his property, viz., his collection of books. This, however, did not hinder him from giving full expression from his store of knowledge to his views upon the disputed question about the inheritance of the rich Sanvel Kann, his opinion upon this point having been solicited.³

¹ No. 112. R. Jacob Cohen Poppers (*v. Horovitz, Frankfurter Rabbinen*, II., 82 *sqq.*), when Rabbi of Coblentz in 1698, wished to allow the use of the ship-bridge on Sabbath, but was prevented from doing so by R. Gabriel Eskeles; *v. שב יעקב*, I. 16.

² No. 179, the end.

³ In vol. IV. of his collected works, p. 129; according to the index in *Jair Nathib*, p. 51a, דיני ח"מ דף קכ"ט ק"ל: תשובה בענין שטר כחח"ז, וירושת המנוח העשיר מופלג זנוויל קן הנקרא גויביצכאן דפין גדולים וכבר ידוע למכ"ת שאני פה, חות יאיר. Cp. נדפס ס"ג לימבורג לע"ע נדחה מפני השעה רעה ורעש שבק"ק קובלענץ:

If there was any consolation for the sudden way in which he had been deprived of his Rabbinate, where he had worked with all his heart and strength, it lay in the thought that, by returning to Worms, he would again be brought nearer to his father. At the end of the year 1669, when the winter had just begun, he again took up his residence in Worms. But R. Samson was not long to experience the pain of seeing his son, who was worthy of any Rabbinical post in Israel, grieving for the loss of his office. On the 19th of April, 1670, after having ministered to the community at Worms for twenty years, he was gathered unto his fathers.¹ What animated him even in his dying moments was the hope and assurance that his son would be chosen his successor. Before his death he expressly prayed and adjured his congregation, both in writing and by word of mouth,² to let their choice fall upon his son, whom he could declare before God himself to be worthy and fitted to succeed him. It was in vain. Even the great reverence in which the tall R. Löw was held in Prague could not secure the election of his son R. Bezalel as his successor,³ and the son of his great grandson was now to learn in Worms, that all the respect and obedience to authority could not establish a hereditary Rabbinate in Judaism.

Perhaps the settlement of R. Jair in Worms destroyed his chances of election; at least it seemed to be the impression that a native of a place, who resided there, could not be appointed Rabbi.⁴ Again, their eyes were turned to Prague, where R. Aaron Teomim, the descendant of a

¹ Levysohn ; Zunz, *L. G.*, p. 437.

² חות יאיר, No. 31, and p. 230b. The expression ותחילת קיץ נשרף denotes the death of his father, Levysohn, p. 72, has been incorrectly applied to the burning of a part of the town of Worms. Cp. J. M. Zunz, *ib.* 146 sq.

³ Meir Perles, מגילת יוחסין, p. 9b.

⁴ לא יעשה כן במקומינו למנות ב"ב בקהלתנו לרב, חות יאיר, p. 230b., J. M. Zunz, *ib.* 147, has overlooked this point.

famous family, had, for the last eleven years, been making a great name for himself as a preacher. Unanimously elected¹ by the community of Worms to be their Rabbi, R. Aaron forthwith entered upon his new office, where he at once found favour by his great powers of eloquence. Additional means of uniting him with his new home was afforded by a marriage. Aaron Fränkel, of Fürth, the brother of R. Bärmann Fränkel, and nephew of R. Israel Fränkel, like Teomim a native of Vienna, became his son-in-law.² Bacharach had the pain of beholding a stranger dealing at his own will and pleasure with the regulations instituted by his father, and of being compelled as a private person to hold his peace and to obey another, when he himself should have been issuing commands.³

But this was not the only pang that the year of suffering, 1670, caused him. The expulsion of the Jews from Vienna was contemporaneous with their exile from Hammelburg and Fulda.⁴ In the former town lived his brother-in-law, R. Isaac Brilin, and in the latter his friend, R. Meir Stern, who was chief of the Rabbinate. R. Isaac fled to Worms, whence he was summoned to the post of Rabbi in Mannheim.⁵ R. Meir made his way to Frankfurt, where he remained for many years before the German community in Amsterdam elected him to be their ecclesiastical head.⁶

DAVID KAUFMANN.

(*To be continued.*)

¹ בְּנֵדֵי אֶהְרֵן, Preface.

² Kaufmann, *Die letzte Vertreibung*, 194 seq., 179, note 5, 182, note 6; Cp. also *Berliner's Magazin*, 1890.

³ In No. 126 R. Jair informs us of a regulation that R. Samson had intended to bring into force, but had not succeeded in doing so. This was, that as the days of Chanuka were the only ones in the year when indulging in card-playing was tolerated, he would prefer that these days of pleasure be allotted instead to Christmas week. With the words הֵרֵט בָּא מִקְרִיב בָּא, R. Jair alludes to Teomim.

⁴ Kaufmann, *ib.* 226, Note 2.

⁵ חֵזֶק יֵאִיר, No. 136.

⁶ Ch. N. Dembitzer, *ib.*, p. 52b, note; p. 97a, note.